"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister"

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WAR SUFFERERS'

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

RELIEF BULLETIN

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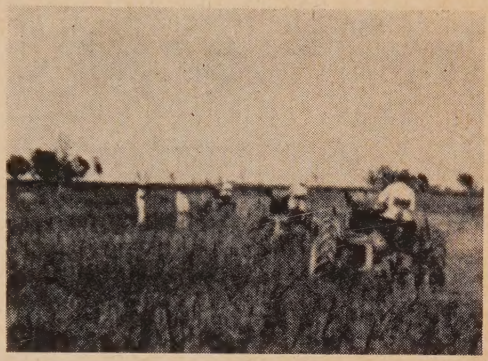
The Foreign Ox

By Clayton Beyler

Training Chinese students to become efficient tractor drivers and mechanics is a new order in the life of the Chinese. A step which most Chinese students never take is that from book learning to hard physical labor. At first some of them hesitate to pick up the grease gun and get their hands dirty, but this soon wears off and after several days their hands look as if they have been working around machinery.

When No. 1 boy runs into a tree and ruins the radiator of his tractor, when Little Fish breaks the speed rule and drives out to the field in fourth gear, when No. 16 runs out of gas half way to the field, when the new student on No. 8 sticks his plow on a stump and has to call the instructor to get it off, when No. 2 cannot figure out why the tractor doesn't move when he puts it in gear (he has killed the engine), when No. 11 comes out the third morning and drives half way across the field with the left wheel in the furrow—life is never dull for the instructors at the Tractor Training School at Fan-chia, a booming village thirty miles south of Kaifeng. Nevertheless it is a challenging job to have so much good equipment to work with, such a need to be met, and some very good Chinese students to train to do the job. This is the type of relief and rehabilitation work that one enjoys doing, and it is something that really seems worth while. But there are other times when we have to think of that famous saying which "Tuck," one of the U.N.R.R.A. instructors, coined when one of his ambitious students drove the tractor and disk on the wrong side of the field: "That makes me very unhappy."

If we are unhappy at least for very long at a time it is our own fault, for we have



These tractors are being driven by three students trained by Clayton Beyler and Edwin Schrag.

all new equipment: nineteen Allis-Chalmers tractors, the W-C model with pneumatic tires, nineteen 2-bottom 12-inch Little Genius plows, nineteen Avery tandem disks, a lubrication trailer, a flood light trailer, and Craftsman tool kits—the kind that are too expensive for the ordinary farmer at home. The Tractor Training School is administered by U.N.R.R.A.-C.N.R.R.A. with the first period of the school to last for six weeks. Theoretically after that C.N.R.R.A. should be able to carry on by themselves with the students we train as the teachers of the next group. At present there are five foreigners helping at the project site as administrators, mechanics, or instructors: two U.N.R.R.A., one F.A.U., and two from the M.C.C. Edwin Schrag and Clayton Beyler started in with the arrival of the tractors in Kaifeng on May 21. They helped in the loading and unloading of over thirty truckloads of tractors, plows, gasoline, etc. that needed to be moved to Fan-chia. After a week of this and the setting up of the camp, a few students arrived and the instruction of field operations began. Beginning from June 17, Harold Wik has taken Clayton Beyler's place as one of the instructors and supervisors of field operations.

Eager to Learn

Most of the students and mechanics are young men from engineering or agricultural schools. All of them are very eager to learn and do learn very quickly considering they have never been around farm machinery before. Usually after two days of instruction they can handle a tractor and plow by themselves and a new student can be started. We start them in driving down the furrow with a plow on behind, figuring they might as well learn what a tractor is supposed to do. After about half a day showing them how to pull the power lift rope and turn at the ends, the instructor gets off and lets the student "solo." They make mistakes, but we figure that is the fastest way to learn. The hard work for the instructor begins when he has half a dozen tractors to supervise. There are two jeeps for this kind of work but usually they are busy at something else, and the field instructor walks his legs off going from one side of the field to another helping one student hook up a "lost" plow, showing another what to do when he gets stuck in the sand, pulling weeds out of a choked plow, and seeing that every plow is doing a good job. The students should learn to do all of these things for themselves but there are just too many things for an inexperienced operator to watch and it will take weeks before a student can be expected to get out of all the tight spots. They understand English well enough that we do not bother to learn the Chinese equivalents for clutch, throttle, carbureter, etc. They know what to do when we yell, "Stop," but we quickly discovered that "whoa" and "hey, there" make no impression.

Hard Work

Learning to drive a tractor on this waste land which has not been under cultivation for eight years is like driving through an obstacle course: grass taller than a man, willow stumps up to six inches in diameter, "jeep traps" — big holes six feet deep which the people left after digging out tree trunks buried by the Yellow River flood. When the students get through learning under such conditions they really will know how! The tractor operators should not have to put up with such conditions, and usually they do not as there are over one thousand laborers on a C.N.R.R.A. work relief project going ahead of the tractors to dig out the stumps, cut down the tallest grass, and fill up the holes. Granted that this is hard work especially in hot weather, but these thousand laborers, I say laborers rather than men because many of them are boys, cannot clear enough land for the fifteen tractors which we would like to keep on the plows. This would be less than one hundred acres a day or ten laborers for each acre. This does make us very unhappy as we would like to see this rare equipment kept busy, at least more than eight hours a day. And when the laborers miss a stump or leave a pile of loose grass, or leave a big hole which they have dug, or cannot get the stumps hauled away fast enough, then is when the tractor drivers and instructors begin to sweat, pull grass, throw stumps, and get very unhappy indeed! After two weeks of this kind of work one decides that he cannot hurry the East even with power machinery and so settles down to the slow steady grind realizing all the time that it is just too hot to work.

Problems

The foreigners are not the only ones with problems and difficulties, for the local farmers of Fan-chia and the neighboring villages have a very hard time figuring out the meaning of this sudden influx of foreign plows and their willingness to plow all this land for the experience of training a few Chinese drivers. They suspect that the government will take part of their land away after it is plowed. Individual land holdings is another problem but we plow in big lands, half a mile long, regardless of the boundaries which look as if they would have been lost under the new deposit of silt, but the Chinese farmers have an unusual sense of direction and location for knowing just where their little plot of land should be and have already started a few beans among the grass. It seems too bad to have to turn under their crop, but after plowing and disking they can plant their beans again on a good, clean seed

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Thinking about Relief

With thousands of dollars going into the relief program monthly, it is well that we reconsider the ultimate purpose and calling of our M.C.C. relief program. Jesus saw and met the need of those who were hungry and sick, but He also saw the spiritual hunger and needs of the soul. The fact that people are hungry is ample reason for sharing our plenty with the starving, but does not our vision go farther than sharing food and clothing? Physical needs are great, but the spiritual needs are very great and this is the task and challenge of the Church. Unless we see and relieve the destitute as Christ saw and met them we might as well remit our funds to the larger secular organizations for the purchase of food.

It is the calling of the Church to witness and be messengers of the "Good News," the purpose of which is to reconcile men to Christ—to bring men to a new life through believing, repenting, and cross-bearing. In reality all of us are messengers of the "Good News" if we have life and have the spiritual darkness dispelled from our own hearts.

The fruit of Christ-like living most certainly needs to be among all of us as relief workers. None of us ought to be so occupied with the mechanics of life and service that we become spiritual dwarfs. We must give as well as take or we are nothing more than stagnant pools. Out of the C.P.S. and relief program has come a new definition and meaning of Christian service, and I trust that out of the relief program will come new convictions, visions, and meanings of the command of Christ, "Go and tell." Prayer, vision, and faithful service can produce consecrated talents and volunteers for our Mission Boards in the future. A potential mission program lies ahead for the Church. "Is not life more precious than food, and the body than clothing?" (W.T. Matt. 6:25).

Mr. Chang (John to us) is one of the mechanics but he also makes a very good driver.

THE FOREIGN OX

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bed and C.N.R.R.A. will pay for loss of seed or prospective harvest. In one village where there were not enough drills or animals to do their own seeding we rigged up five Chinese drills behind one tractor and with five men guiding the drills were able to seed around fifteen acres a day—pretty fast for the old farmers walking behind the "foreign ox" that doesn't need to stop and rest. Another problem is to know what to do about the graves. Most of the grave mounds have been destroyed by the flood, but they have resurrected several graveyards and the few new mounds leave difficulties which we leave to the Chinese to settle. I would not know just how close a "foreign plow" could come to the grave without disturbing the sleep of some honored ancestor. Whenever the tractors come close you can be sure that someone will be around to watch; so I try to assure them that a tractor is harmless and that it can turn around the grave mound.

The little village of Fan-chia which had less than twenty families who had returned to rebuild their ruined village has suddenly become a very important village on the relief map of China, and activities carried on there are talked about around the globe. The coming of the tractors has brought a much bigger relief program than any of us expected. The camp for the tractors and students now looks small in comparison with the rest of the camps which have been put up within the last month. These include a camp for the stump grubbers with over one hundred tents and a feeding station, C.N.R.R.A. working team with at least fifteen tents, a small hospital, the Provincial Government headquarters, and others whose part in the total project is hard to ascertain. It looks like an army, and it is an army for the agricultural rehabilitation of China with tractors instead of tanks, plowshares instead of swords, and shovels and grubbing hoes instead of spears.

What of the Future?

These small land holdings bring up the question of the future use of power farm machinery by the Chinese farmer. One can easily see that the ordinary farmer could never afford to own a tractor for his two or three acres which is the average size land holding of the North China Plain. Whether it would be possible for a whole village to own several tractors co-operatively or whether these tractors will pass out of the life of the Chinese after these special jobs are finished remains to be seen. For the present we do know that a few more hundred acres of land will get under cultivation faster than if left to the ox team and hoe. There are rumors of seven hundred more tractors coming to Honan. There is work for them to do as well as for any drivers or mechanics who come along. Fan-chia is only one of five thousand villages that need to be rebuilt, and the nineteen tractors which are now at work would be hard to find in the two million acres of waste land which has grown up with grass and willow since the Yellow River flood in 1938.

We have come half way around the globe and find ourselves at work in a reclamation project that amazes us at the strange mixture of "foreign plows," Chinese drills, grubbing hoes, gasoline, and C.N.R.R.A. flour. Perhaps it is as new and strange to us as to the thousands of Chinese who walk miles to see such a big "ox" and plow do with ease the work which is almost impossible for them. There are times when things do not go so easily and smoothly as they would at home, but to hear the applause from the Chinese crowd that watched the plowing of the first field leaves an impression never to be forgotten, and we, like them, think that it is "very good."

British Rally in "Save Europe Now" Campaign

London.—In response to the appeals of the "Save Europe Now" Committee, set up here recently by a group of distinguished men, fifty thousand people have already stated their willingness to spare food and points toward the feeding of Europeans of whatever nationality who face the worst winter in centuries.

British papers point out that the blockade of Germany after World War I was prematurely lifted because the occupying troops threatened to mutiny if the starvation of German children continued. Conditions, particularly in eastern Germany, are infinitely worse now than at any time after the First World War. Already British soldiers are risking court-martial by giving pertinent facts to the press. Field Marshall Montgomery himself has testified to the increase of epidemics in Germany.—World Press

The La Plata Project

By Leroy Mann

The La Plata Project of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit is located in the beautiful La Plata Valley about fifty miles southwest of San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. Here in this valley surrounded by mountains, the Mennonite Central Committee has been carrying on a program of service to the rural people. The La Plata Project was begun in July, 1943, and since that time has continued to grow in its scope. In addition to the project at La Plata five continental workers are stationed at Buena Vista and three had been working at Comerio until just recently.

At the present time there are forty-three continental workers and about twenty Puerto Ricans engaged in this project. One of the main services of the project is the 25-bed Mennonite General Hospital staffed by two doctors, five nurses, three C.P.S. attendants, two laboratory men and several nurses' aides. During the year 1945 there were 1,134 patients hospitalized, 834 operations performed, and over 9,000 outpatient clinic visits made. In addition to the hospital our medical service includes several outlying clinics, a medical social service, and a dental office.

The community building program also occupies an important place in our effort to meet the needs of our friends here. This program centers around the community centers which in 1945 had a total attendance of over two hundred thousand. In addition to the community center, which provides recreational and educational facilities, a public health nursing service and also health and physical education classes are carried on in the nearby schools. Also in connection with this phase of our work two milk stations are operated to provide much needed milk for the Puerto Rican children. Other types of service that are given include a community sanitation program, an agricultural program, and an embalming service.

All of this work is being carried on for the benefit of the rural people living in the La Plata valley and surrounding areas. The majority of the Puerto Ricans in this valley live in the cement houses built by the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (P.R.R.A.). However, many of these people are living in wooden shacks, frequently in unbelievably crowded conditions, with sometimes ten or twelve persons occupying a two or three-room shack about twelve by eighteen feet. These shacks can be seen on every hillside and usually are built on stilts which frequently may be ten feet long on the downhill side.

Visiting a Puerto Rican home is a very interesting experience and most enjoyable if you can speak Spanish. The hospitality of the Puerto Ricans is one of their most admirable traits. Very seldom is it possible to stop in front of a Puerto Rican home to chat with the family and not receive an invitation to come in and sit down and almost invariably you are offered a cup of coffee before leaving. Their generosity and hospitality are carried to such an extent that it is not wise to admire a picture or table piece too much or the host will insist that you take it with you.

A few interesting side lights on Puerto Rican life might just be mentioned briefly. For example, Puerto Rican bread is baked in loaves three feet long. The Puerto Rican farmer milks his cows with one hand and instead of using a bucket he uses a small bottle for the milk. A Puerto Rican girl or woman in mourning dresses in black for one year after the death of the one for whom she is mourning. Another very interesting thing is the use which the natives make of the machete which is their lawn mower, butcher knife, ax, paring knife, and weapon. The machete is a long curved steel knife which they use for practically anything from cutting firewood and sugar cane to peeling oranges and cutting bread.

Much more could be said about the people of Puerto Rico, their customs, culture, social life, and work, but an article of this length will not permit. Puerto Rico is truly a land of sunshine, but it is also a land of need, and it is when we look at the work that has been done in the light of this tremendous need that we cannot help but feel that everything we can do is but a drop in the bucket compared to what should be done. It is our daily prayer that God may give us strength and grace to continue to the best of our ability our work for our friends and neighbors here in Puerto Rico.

Notes from the Field

Paraguay

A kindergarten for preschool age children has been organized in several of the Friesland Colony villages under the leadership of Miss Elsie Legien. About 25 children attend in each village, and the particular value is to begin speaking to them in High German in preparation for their entrance into the first grade. Low German is spoken in the homes.

Eighteen bales of clothing were distributed to Friesland colonists under the supervision of Amos Yoder and Betty Keeney, M.C.C. workers, and Mr. Kornelius Kroeker, Colony administrator. Upon receiving their bundles, many colonists said it was "better than Christmas." The little boys were particularly happy with their "bambaches"—in reality, American knickers worn to the ankles. Twenty-four bales of clothing went to the Chaco to be distributed.

Germany

The first step in the participation of German Mennonites in the distribution of C.R.A.L.O.G. supplies was realized this past month. In Bavaria the German Mennonites have a relief committee known as Christen Phlicht (Christian Duty). Michael Horsch, elder statesman of German Mennonites, is chairman of this committee. Initially Christen Phlicht will be distributing M.C.C.-contributed supplies to the 900 or more Mennonite refugees in Bavaria. The participation of the German Mennonites in the C.R.A.L.O.G. program will increase in the weeks and months ahead.

Several weeks ago I visited an underground hospital in Kassel—260 patients cared for in this gloomy air-raid bunker. So scarce are medical supplies that paper bandage instead of gauze must be used. The head doctor reported that the mortality rate for persons undergoing surgery has increased from 2% to 20%—attributable to the patients' lowered resistance, in turn based on malnutrition. Mennonite flour is daily used in the diet of the children in this hospital.

A week ago I established new offices in Wiesbaden. Here I shall be compelled to remain for another ten days—spending my time resting, reading, meditating, studying German. After my little affair with a lively jeep on wet pavement two weeks ago, I feel led to give some "experienced" counsel on the operation of jeeps . . . I am firmly convinced that one's approach to these tricky vehicles should be cautious and conservative: on straight, dry pavement only 25 miles per hour; on wet pavement throw it into four-wheel drive, shift to low gear and climb out and walk beside the jeep. With such precautions one can escape confinement in orthopedic wards of hospitals . . . perhaps.—Robert Kreider.

. . . . . .

Brother Goering and I had the privilege of entering the French Zone of Germany for a day. We met Mennonites from the Palatinate and the part of Hesse in the French Zone of Germany. My impression was that there is less material damage in the farm villages than in France. The Mennonites report that they have enough food and sufficient clothing to meet bare minimum needs now except in the case of growing children but need shoes badly. —H. C. Yoder.

Philippine Islands

My big problem now is to transport the 50 bed hospital (43 measured tons) from Manila where we have it stored, to Vigan. I can take it by rail from Manila to San Fernando but that is only half way. From San Fernando to Vigan it will need to be trucked, and that again is a problem because of the bandit-infested highways and the rainy season. We have to ford several rivers and cross others on rafts made of bamboo and old gasoline drums. When there is rain in the mountains, the rivers rise rapidly and cannot be forded or crossed by raft. The only thing to do is wait a few hours for the waters to subside.—Dale Nebel.

The American Bible Society has purchased three carloads of paper for shipment to China. In Shanghai, during the war, the plates of the China Bible House were hidden and escaped looting. As there appears to be binding material and printing presses in Shanghai, but a great shortage of paper, it is planned that the Society's secretary in China will proceed with the publication of Scriptures there.

Peace Notes

Letters to Congressmen

Various persons and groups who have been especially concerned in issues such as conscription, have emphasized the importance of expressing opinions by writing letters to congressmen and other government officials. Frequently this action is strongly urged in view of the fact that presumably a congressman votes according to the wishes expressed by those whom he represents. Thus, according to this reasoning, a flood of letters on a certain issue tends to influence the congressman to vote in a certain way.

Public opinion polls give interesting information concerning the prevalence and effectiveness of such letters to congressmen. The National Opinion Research Center of Denver, Colorado, has found that approximately 13% of the civilian adults today express in writing their views on public questions such as O.P.A. or Atomic Energy. Those who are more privileged educationally, economically, and occupationally write more frequently than those less privileged. Mail from the midwest tends to be influenced by religious and educational groups, while that from the East indicates the power of fraternal and labor organizations. Most congressmen value a few personal letters or interviews a great deal more than a large number of mimeographed form letters or telegrams. In other words, content counts much more than quantity.

Unlike some church groups, Mennonites have generally not adopted this technique of voicing their opinions through the writing of letters to congressmen. This attitude is sometimes criticised as constituting a failure to courageously witness against evil as a Christian should. This criticism must be faced and answered—either by a clear statement of what we stand for and why—or by a confession of weakness in this area of our position. Obviously we need to think through our position and then adhere to it, rather than blindly follow what others might have to say or deliberately remain ignorant of the problem.

It is difficult to give a detailed and specific rule to be followed in this matter. It seems that in this, as in many other instances, there are only general basic principles to be followed, and that each individual must from these arrive at his own conviction.

It is certainly our Christian duty to remind all people of the basic teachings of the Scriptures—to proclaim the Gospel. The Christian is to witness against evil and warn evildoers of the consequences of evil. Government officials are merely human beings who, in fact, may be in desperate need of spiritual help personally. The Christian point of view, if expressed to them, may help them to see the spiritual and moral implications of an issue. It is interesting to note that Menno Simons addressed messages of supplication to the magistrates of his day, entreating them to heed to the will of God in exercising their civil authority.

One's motives for thus expressing opinions should constitute an earnest desire to witness for truth and right, and not simply to realize personal or selfish wishes. The spirit of threat or vengeance must be absent, for above all things, the prevailing attitude must be that of love. As Christian stewards, we are not responsible to produce converts, but rather to proclaim the message. If men refuse to heed our words of counsel, we nevertheless have done our duty in reminding them of the truth.

Reaping the Harvest of War

The simple truth is that war is again reaping its harvest of consequences. This struggle which was to discipline men to order and mutual regard, regenerate the nations morally, bring to the world "a great spiritual revival," has done just the opposite. It has corrupted mankind, and taught the race the methods of justification of violence. Think of dedicating men for years to the task of killing, destroying, looting, and then expecting these same men to return home as angels of peace and light. Violence taught as a duty at the front in wartime is only too easily transformed into violence practiced as an indulgence at home in peacetime.—John Haynes Holmes.

The Church must give no quarter to the spirit of hatred. She must not tone down the teaching of Jesus but must speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.—William Austin Smith

Thank You!

Dear Brethren in America:

My home is at Flushing, the place which is bombed over the hundred times and at 4 Nov., 1944, shocked by 40,000 shells that all the houses and buildings are damaged. My house had three shells, one in the fore room, one in the roof and one in the room upstairs. We are all very happy that we received the flour and raisins which you have contributed for the people of Walcheren.—C. H. Willemse, Netherlands.

Dear Sir:

I am writing you these lines with a heart full of gratitude. Many thanks for the food. I will thank you night and day, and also our Father God, whose wonders and goodness can bend people's hearts as easily as water flows. Within fourteen days we had to move three times, twice because of floods, and once because of bombs; some bombs fell within thirty feet of us. To have to live through this with a family of ten children (one of them only five months) is terrible. Many thanks, and many greetings.—Adriaan den Hollanden.

Dear Brethren:

We are about 100 persons in the camp Klovermarken that have received aid from America. It is not very often that one sees so much happiness and joy on the faces of the people in camp. I am here with my parents and five children; one was killed by a bomb while we were on flight from Russia. My husband is still out there. While we were trying to escape, many were overtaken by the Russians and were sent back. This caused much grief and heartache. Those who now live in Poland also have a heavy cross to bear; they are being mistreated and have to live on a starvation diet. We have put our plight entirely in God's hands, for we cannot see through these dark days. All of the 100 persons in this camp wish to express their sincere thanks for everything they have received from you.—Mrs. Neta Bartel, Denmark.

To Mennonite Boys and Girls in America:

I would like to write to you this little letter to thank all of you and also your fathers and mothers for those things which we have received here in Holland. I am eleven years old. My little brother and I had to go, the last few months, on wooden shoes or only on wooden soles with some ropes. But now I got a pair of American shoes from you. You don't know how it is to have shoes again and a nice pair of trousers and a sweater and stockings, and still more—and that's why I write you this letter for I'm so glad for all these things, my brother also. (Dick, 16 yrs., Fred, 11 yrs., Rob, 9 yrs., Wim, 4 yrs., Arnold, 2 yrs.)

Children of One Father
Shake hands together
Wherever we may live
On whatever clime or land
However we may speak
Children of One Father
We are, everyone.

Freddie Vriesman
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